



# ST. ALEXIUS MEDICAL CENTER

PrimeCare health group

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July 29, 1998

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas  
Commissioner  
Federal Communications Committee  
1919 M Street, NW, Room 222  
Washington, D.C. 20554

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CC Docket Nos. 97-21, 96-45 and DA 98-1336  
USAC Plan of Reorganization

Dear Ms. Magalie Roman Salas:

We are writing on behalf of the St. Alexius Medical Center, Bismarck, ND and The TeleCare Network (a telemedicine network of 27 rural health care facilities in North and South Dakota) to comment on the proposed reorganization of the Rural Health Care Corporation, Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC), and Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) into one entity.

The Universal Service program is extremely valuable for the long term viability of the St. Alexius TeleCare Network and the rural health care facilities that participate in the network. Without the discounted rates it will be impossible to continue to provide this service in rural communities. Without the access to specialty care that telemedicine provides to the rural communities, the financial viability of these small rural hospitals and clinics may be in serious jeopardy.

While we applaud the Congressionally mandated plan to consolidate the organizations into one entity, we are seriously concerned about the lack of rural health care representatives on the 18 member governing board and its 7 member Rural Health Care Advisory Committee. The proposed consolidation would include only one health care representative within this entire structure. We are concerned that the interests of the rural health care community can not be represented with the proposed board and committee structure.

We urge you to increase representation of rural health care interests to include a minimum of 2 additional members who understand the difficulties associated with improving access to quality and affordable health service in rural areas. The new Rural Health Care Committee of the USAC Board must have the necessary expertise and understanding of the rural health care program, healthcare in general and rural healthcare needs. Unless the health care community receives additional representation on the new Board, the FCC will not meet the goal of preserving the

"Let all be received as Christ."

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distinct functions, expertise, and mission of the rural health care program.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If St. Alexius Medical Center can be of any assistance to you on this issue please do not hesitate to contact us at 701-224-7130.

Sincerely,

*Shari Frueh, BSN, RN*

Shari Frueh, BSN, RN  
TeleCare Network Project Director

cc: Senator Kent Conrad  
Senator Byron Dorgan  
Representative Pomeroy